

TO PROVIDE FOR A FISH-RESCUE STATION ON THE
MISSISSIPPI RIVER IN WISCONSIN.

JANUARY 29, 1921.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of
the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. WHITE of Maine, from the Committee on the Merchant Marine
and Fisheries submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 15525.]

The Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, to which was referred bill H. R. 15525, being an act to provide for the establishment on the Mississippi River of a fish-rescue station, having held hearings thereon and having fully considered the same, report the bill to the House with the following amendments with the recommendation that it do pass:

In lines 1 and 2 of the title strike out the words "in the State of Wisconsin," making the title read as follows: "To provide for the establishment on the Mississippi River of a fish-rescue station, to be under the direction of the Bureau of Fisheries of the Department of Commerce."

In lines 3 and 4, after the enacting clause, strike out the words "in the State of Wisconsin" and insert in lieu thereof the words "at a point to be selected by the Secretary of Commerce."

In line 6, after the word "operations," insert the words "throughout the Mississippi Valley" followed by a comma.

In lines 7 and 8 strike out the words "at a point to be selected by the Secretary of Commerce."

On page 2, line 3, insert the words "per annum" after the numeral "\$3,000."

On page 2, line 6, insert the words "per annum" after the numeral "\$2,400"; and after the words "two field foremen at" strike out the numeral "\$1,800" and insert the words "\$1,500 each per annum" in lieu thereof.

On page 2, line 7, after the words "five fish-culturists at large at" strike out the numeral "\$1,400" and insert in lieu thereof the numeral "\$1,200"; and after the word "each" insert the words "per annum." After the words "one engineer at large at \$1,400" insert the words "per annum."

On page 2, line 8, after the words "clerk at \$1,200" insert the words "per annum"; and after the words "two coxswains at large at \$1,200 each" insert the words "per annum."

On page 2, line 9, after the words "fish-culturists at" strike out the numeral "\$1,800" and insert the numeral "\$900" in lieu thereof; and following the word "each" insert the words "per annum."

The purpose of the bill is to add to the existing facilities of the Department of Commerce for fish-rescue work in the Mississippi Valley and for aiding in the propagation of mussels in the waters of the Mississippi River.

The importance of the fish-rescue work of the bureau is difficult to overstate. The bureau has conducted work of this nature for many years, but the increasing appreciation on the part of the American people of the food value of fish has directed general attention to the activities of the bureau, to the inadequacy of its facilities, and to the great advantage to be derived to the whole people from the further extension of its efforts.

The Mississippi River offers an unusual opportunity for the prevention of great waste in this food resource. During every year from its upper reaches to its mouth, except where confined by artificial means, it overflows its banks and then rapidly subsides, leaving hundreds of landlocked puddles, pools and expanses of water of sufficient size to be dignified with the designation of ponds or lakes, filled with millions upon millions of edible fishes. Most of these fishes are young, but they represent the future adult supply of all the leading species of the Mississippi River. Through droughts of summer these pools and lakes dry up and the fishes therein are lost. If the fishes escape the droughts of summer, the extreme severity of the winters in the upper reaches freeze over these shallow bodies of water and the fishes suffocate.

The Bureau of Fisheries has undertaken to rescue from these landlocked waters the fishes left therein and to return them to the main stream. The testimony before the committee establishes that during the year 1919 the bureau took from such pools approximately 156,657,000 food fishes, and placed them in the river again. The territory covered by its operations during the year extended from Minnesota and Wisconsin to Arkansas and Mississippi. It has been estimated that of these rescued fishes fully 25 per cent will live and reach a marketable size and that the value of these marketable fish will exceed \$6,500,000. The principal fishes among those rescued were the buffalo fish, carp, catfish, pike, perch, black bass and other species of bass and many other varieties. The cost to the Government has been comparatively insignificant. In 1914 about 2,500,000 fishes were salvaged at an average cost of \$3.18 per thousand. In 1919 the average cost per thousand was reduced to less than 20 cents.

Intimately connected with the rescue of the fish is another conservation activity. It is established that the pearl button industry of the Mississippi Valley, which gives employment to some twenty thousand persons and has an annual product valued at from five to six million dollars, is dependent upon the maintenance of the fish supply of the river. The young mussels when thrown off by their parents sink to the bottom and are destroyed if fishes are not present. If these mussels are to survive they must pass the early part of their existence on the gills of fishes. There they live until at the

proper point of development they separate themselves from the gills of the fishes and take up their independent existence along the bottom of the river.

The fishes obtained in the rescue operations are turned into ponds in which spawning mussels are held and they there become thoroughly inoculated. The fishes are then liberated in the open waters and they then distribute themselves and the mussels throughout the wide stretch of the river. Your committee is advised that through these artificial means from 200,000,000 to 300,000,000 young mussels are brought in contact with the gills of rescued fishes and given a proper start in life each year.

This fish rescue work serves both the purposes to which reference is here made. In the judgment of the committee, either work justifies the House in acting favorably on this bill.

The amendments of the committee speak for themselves. The amount authorized for the construction of buildings and for the purchase of necessary supplies in connection with the work and the salaries for the personnel of the station are, in the opinion of the committee, reasonable and necessary if the work is to be furthered.



